

ASH WEDNESDAY 02/14/18

Mt. Calvary West View/ Pentecost, Avella

JOEL 2:12-19, 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20B-6:10, MATTHEW 6: 1-21

Theme: Do Not Look Dismal This Lent

+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +

Our Text is taken from the Gospel of St. Matthew, the 6th chapter:

And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

öFasting and bodily preparation are indeed a fine outward training, but he is truly worthy and well prepared.ö How? Anybody? öWho has faith in these Words: -Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.ø This every confirmand has remembered from their instruction in the Sacrament of the Altar. It seems that fasting is not a öLutheranö problem. In fact, your copy of the Book of Concord ó you *do* have a copy, yes? ó only addresses fasting in about 16 places. It refutes Thomas Aquinasø position that fasting helps remove the guilt of sin; it does agree that as an outward training it can help us not be so attached to our fleshly desires; It agrees that fasting is Biblical as an assisting discipline in the concentration of knowing God, yet as a necessary law to prepare for the sacraments, no, that is not Biblical.

Fasting is something that early Jews were want to do. The people asked of Jesus, ö*Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?*ö it was expected of religious minded people to be fasting. Jesus *could* have told them He instructed the disciples to not let on that they are fasting, so as to not violate His teachings in todayø text, but in the reply to the people, all Jesus would tell them was, ö*Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in*

*that day.*ö Jesus took the emphasis away from the fasting and placed the thoughts where they belong ó on the life, death and burial of Jesus.

That is what Lent, and the ashes are all about. We are not to be showing ashes as a sign of pride in showing others that we are better Christians. We do not fast in order to show people that they need to step it up and be more like us. Fasting is personal, and fasting is done to the glory of God, and if not a single soul on this earth knows about it, it makes no difference. However, what people *do* need to know, is the life of Christ. That Christ is the promise made to the Israelites that from their people would come the Savior of sin and eternal death; that because of Him they are no longer a reproach among the nations. That He has indeed suffered all temptations, and yet, faltered not once. He went to the cross, died once and for all, to take upon Himself the wrath of the Father. He Who has no sin, indeed became sin for you, so that you may have righteousness from God.

This is the message of the day, and if people see your ashes and a dismal countenance, well, how can they find the joy of Christ in that? This would be an obstacle to your ministry, Saint Paul would say. So, none of that! Do not look dismal this Lent! Anoint your head; wash your face; you can keep the ashes for today ó as long as you use them to direct people to the salvation found in Christ and His resurrection. In His most Holy Name. **AMEN.**

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS. AMEN+

Offering / Prayers

There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment